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ABSTRACT

Several reports on the link between the economy and the quality of child care indicate that: (1) early care and education benefits two generations of workers; (2) quality is essential to, but is rarely found in, early care and education programs; and (3) the key to quality is the professional development of practitioners. A vision of dynamic career development in the child care field must address the problems of inadequately trained practitioners and training systems that are fragmented, sporadic, and unsuited to the needs of adult learners. A career progression model for the child care field would adopt an approach in which different roles and requirements are assigned to different positions in early care and education programs, and in which practitioners experience role progression and receive increasingly greater rewards as they obtain additional training and skills. A system that permits the practitioner with informal training to earn recognition in the formal system would allow early care and education to realize its professional goals; improve the quality of training programs; and result in increased salaries. State policies regulating training of child care staff are described, and child care training policy issues that states will face in the future are listed. (BC)

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By Gwen Morgan

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About The Center

The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education addresses planning and policy issues about career development for all program types in the early childhood field. Established at Wheelock College in 1990, the Center enables the college to extend the application of its mission of improving the quality of life for children and families. The Center is the vehicle through which Wheelock, in partnership with other national organizations and government policy makers, stimulates and further develops the concept of a dynamic career development system as a model of professionalism.

The Center's current activities include:

- **Publishing a "State of the States" report** which profiles: state licensing standards relating to practitioner qualifications and development; teacher certification standards for the early childhood years; community-based training; contributions by two and four year colleges; funding mechanisms for training; and emerging initiatives.

- **Working with strategic sites** to support and document innovative career development projects at the state and community level.

- **Providing technical assistance** to state and metropolitan groups about career development systems in early care and education.

- **Offering advanced seminars in child care administration** at Wheelock and in cooperation with colleges, state governments and community organizations around the United States. The seminars develop local strengths and encourage local involvement in training leaders in early care and education.

- **Publishing and serving as a clearinghouse** for concept and planning papers; information and documents on the development of state policies; funding strategies, and programs developed at local, state, or national levels.

- **Networking with other national organizations** in the early care and education field to influence policy, and develop program and funding strategies in career development.

Career Progression in Early Care and Education:

A Discussion Paper

By Gwen Morgan

In the decade of the nineties, states are expected to create better systems of early care and education. The Child Care and Development Block Grant, new federal legislation accompanied by new appropriations under Title 4-B of the Social Security Act, Head Start and Education, offers opportunities for new state policies. Anticipating stronger interest among the states in policies that attract and retain staff to work in early care and education programs, The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College conducted a "State of the States" study of current state policies. The study will compile information on states' licensing standards relating to professional development; funding of training in the field; teacher certification in early care and education; colleges that are meeting the needs at the community level; barriers and emerging initiatives. The report will be available from The Center in the Fall of 1992.

This is a work in progress, written to stimulate discussion and feedback.

A few key reports have been widely influential in documenting the link between the quality of child care and the economy. (High/Scope, Hudson Institute, Council on Economic Development, and The National Child Care Staffing Study) Taken together, these studies lead to the conclusion that:

- **Early care and education benefits two generations of workers.**
- **Quality is essential in these programs.**
- **We do not have quality.**
- **The key to quality lies in the professional development of practitioners.**

The field of early care and education is now at a moment of crisis and opportunity. As of 1988, 50% of mothers with children under one year of age were returning to work. By the end of 1987, 56% of all American children were living in families in which both parents work or in which a single parent, usually the mother, was working outside the home.

The time is right for the encouragement of innovative ideas in early care and education. There is broad public interest in expanding these programs and a concern for quality.

Career development is a relatively inexpensive strategy, having a large impact on quality and the retention of practitioners (including family child care and center-based programs).

The issue of career development is not divisive of the different parts of the delivery system, and offers a way to bring professionals together. Further, the issue is likely to

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win support from employers, who understand human resource development and career progression and have already begun to contribute funds for career development in the field. It is reasonable to expect more public/private partnerships, and broad public support for public policies in this area.

A VISION OF DYNAMIC CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Problem

There are compelling reasons for policy attention to the quality of early care and education programs in our nation. The National Child Care Staffing Study indicates that the level of quality we have achieved for most children is "barely adequate." "Barely adequate" programs are not cost effective. They will not contribute to the healthy development of the next generation, they will not strengthen families, and they will not support the productivity of working parents today.

The key to quality is the practitioners. Yet our country has a 41% turnover rate in early care and education programs. Salaries have deteriorated to poverty level. Job openings go unfilled in a field that is perceived as offering dead-end, low-paying jobs.

Directors in Head Start and community programs report that many applicants for entry-level jobs have no qualifications or motivation for work with children. College-trained applicants for professional positions often lack the skills needed by full-day programs, and they turn over rapidly because of low salaries. Middle-level, experienced practitioners, who have had training while on the job, are passed over for promotion in favor of college-trained applicants, but are blocked from career advancement by lack of access to professional training.

The training systems are fragmented, sporadic, and often unsuited to the needs of adult learners. There is no bridge between informal training and formal college programs (see chart on page 3).

With inadequately trained practitioners, it is little wonder that our programs do not measure up in the quality they offer children and their families.

The Idea of a Dynamic System: The Career Progression Model

The serious problems in staffing will not be solved as long as the field is hampered by a nineteenth century view of the profession as static. The career progression model, in contrast, adopts a more dynamic approach in which different roles and requirements are assigned to different positions within all early care and education programs, and in which role progression and higher rewards are built into the structure as practitioners obtain additional training and skills. This progression does not assume a supervisory hierarchy; on the contrary, early care and education programs are usually organized in ways that use modern management concepts of teamwork.

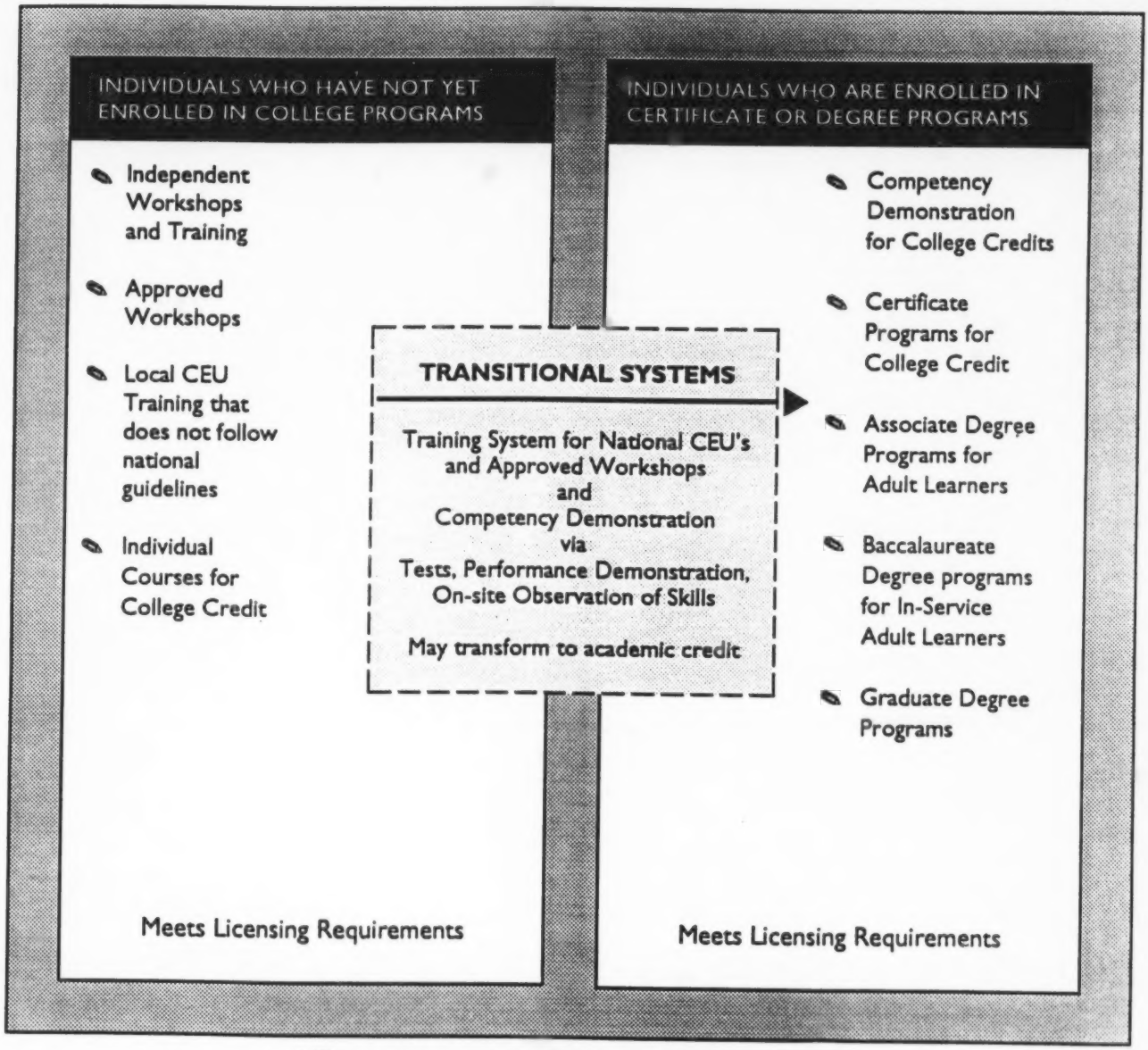
In some states, innovative efforts have been initiated to create a broad comprehensive approach to professional development. A common thread among these innovative strategies is a concept of a dynamic progression of roles, rather than static certification of a single role. A practitioner could enter with pre-service qualifications for a role, such as family child care provider or teacher, or could enter without such qualifications but gain them while working in an apprentice role, moving up when professionally qualified.

This concept requires a vision of professional development that links informal training gained while in entry-level positions to certificate and degree programs, in a single continuum through graduate school. The transitional system provides alternative strategies for bridging the informal and formal systems (see chart on page 3).* At present, the funding sources and the colleges separate informal training completely from certificate and degree programs, so that a practitioner with significant experience, training, and college credit cannot enter the professional track without starting over.

The following chart portrays the vision of an articulated system that permits the practitioner with informal training to earn recognition within the formal system.

**We realize that these terms may not be completely satisfactory in explaining this concept. As there is further discussion of the concept and the model, we expect it will lead to further refinement of the language which describes it.*

Career Progression Model *


INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE NOT YET ENROLLED IN COLLEGE PROGRAMS
Independent Workshops and Training
Approved Workshops
Local CEU Training that does not follow national guidelines
Individual Courses for College Credit
Meets Licensing Requirements
INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENROLLED IN CERTIFICATE OR DEGREE PROGRAMS
Competency Demonstration for College Credits
Certificate Programs for College Credit
Associate Degree Programs for Adult Learners
Baccalaureate Degree programs for In-Service Adult Learners
Graduate Degree Programs
Meets Licensing Requirements
TRANSITIONAL SYSTEMS
Training System for National CEU's and Approved Workshops and Competency Demonstration via Tests, Performance Demonstration, On-site Observation of Skills
May transform to academic credit

*** The two systems are "bridged" by the Transitional System.**
Units in all the Systems are fully articulated with one another.

Amended by Gwen Morgan and Joan Costley from "Delaware First . . . Again, The First Comprehensive State Training Plan for Child Care Staff" (Brown, N., Costley, J., and Morgan, Gwen). Final Report of Planning Project, May 1990, p. 26.

If successful, the advantages of such a vision would be:

• **It allows the field of early care and education** to fully realize its professional goals without dropping its ideal that members of a child's community, who may not have had access to college, be employed in respected roles in the programs.

• **It improves the quality of programs** by more coherent identification of both the content of professional training and the level at which it needs to be taught.

• **It is realistic in recognizing** that the low ratios important in this field require many more adults than school or college classrooms, necessitating employment of a labor force that includes both college graduates and those without extensive college.

• **It offers the potential of higher salaries** related to retention and increased qualifications, so that equitable salary scales keyed to qualifications can be developed across the different systems that offer early care and education: schools, Head Start, and community programs (including center-based and family child care).

• **It offers opportunity for professional salaries** to all practitioners who are willing to pursue professional development, rather than developing a two-class system analogous to officers and enlisted personnel.

The vision is dependent on the availability of professional training, offered in ways appropriate to the adult learner and at levels appropriate to the participant. State policies in the nineties may begin to put some aspects of this vision in place. At present, however, only Delaware and a handful of states are developing comprehensive statewide training plans. In the context of the overall vision, current state efforts include embryonic pieces of the vision, but have not yet fully developed policies for professional development in early care and education programs.

Funding of Training

The Child Welfare League (Durbin, Kopp and Toland, 1990) lists 33 federal sources for training. The most often-used funds now come from Title XX, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Dependent Care Block Grant, the Child Care Food Program, the Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA), the new Family Support Act, Pell Grants, and the CDA Scholarship Act. The sources of funds for informal training are seldom tied to articulation with programs funded through Higher Education. There are, however, interesting and innovative programs that do bridge these systems. The State of the States Report will include information on the various sources of funds, and will report on the state use of certain key streams prior to the availability of Child Care and Development Block Grant funds. Funds for planning and training from the Child Care and Development Block Grant beginning in FY '92 are providing new opportunities to link these systems.

Regulatory Policies

Twelve states have staff qualification requirements for center-based early childhood education practitioners that spell out two levels of qualification for classroom teachers, using a variety of terminology for the more qualified teachers. The purpose of these requirements is to assure that every center has at least one teacher qualified to be a role model or mentor for the other teachers. A side effect of such a system is to establish a potential model of career development, since the master teachers, by whatever name, could enter the center either pre-qualified by college training, or could receive college training while employed before moving into the higher qualified role. Eight states have two levels for directors.

There is a rapidly growing trend among the states to add annual ongoing training requirements to their licensing rules, both for centers and family child care. The intent of these ongoing requirements has been to improve quality, but they have also had the effect of contributing to a career development approach in the field of practice. Ongoing training requirements both address competency for practitioners in their current roles and also qualify them to move into better-paying roles. A few states have begun to spell out the content for ongoing training. One state licensing agency, the Massachusetts Office for Children, has begun to certify center-based practitioners as qualified for particular roles, in addition to licensing facilities.

Thirty-four states give some form of early childhood teacher certification, ranging from a specialized pre-kindergarten certificate to an add-on early childhood endorsement to a teaching certificate.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The states have been called policy laboratories, and it is likely that new federal resources will stimulate the implementation of ideas already developed at the state policy level.

Of particular interest over the next few years will be:

- **states that are developing** comprehensive state wide training plans;
- **states that contribute** to a career path approach in their identification of qualifications and roles in licensing;
- **states that encourage** developmentally appropriate teaching in public education by a teacher certificate that requires coursework in child development and a practicum with children younger than kindergarten;
- **states in which the licensing agency** and the Department of Education collaborate to identify a bridging role across the two qualifying systems;
- **states that develop a coordinated plan** for the use of state and federal training funds, rather than remaining within categorically funded programs;
- **states that address different levels** of training and encourage coherent planning between informal training and college programs as well as articulation across college programs;
- **states that reward programs** or family child care providers with higher reimbursement for more training, or establish salary enhancement schemes linked to training;
- **states that encourage joint training** for Head Start, public schools, and community-based private programs; and
- **states in which the private sector**, particularly employers, participate in improving career paths in early care and education programs through collaborative funding for training.

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